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CARTER-LEAKS

BY BROOKS JACKSON

WASHINGTON (AP) -- PRESIDENT CARTER SUMMONED KEY MEMBERS OF CONGRESS TO THE WHITE HOUSE TODAY TO COMPLAIN THAT CONGRESSIONAL LEAKS OF CLASSIFIED INFORMATION ARE DAMAGING NATIONAL SECURITY.

SENATE REPUBLICAN LEADER HOWARD BAKER OF TENNESSEE SAID AFTERWARD THAT CARTER TOLD THE GROUP THAT RELIABLE INTELLIGENCE SOURCES ARE DRYING UP BECAUSE THEY FEAR THEIR CONFIDENTIAL INFORMATION WILL FIND ITS WAY INTO NEWS REPORTS.

A WHITE HOUSE OFFICIAL, WHO ASKED NOT TO BE NAMED, SAID CARTER ACKNOWLEDGED THAT THE ADMINISTRATION ITSELF IS A SOURCE OF LEAKS, AND HE POINTEDLY REFRAINED FROM SUGGESTING TO THE LEGISLATORS HOW THEY SHOULD STEW THEIR OWN LEAKS.

THE OFFICIAL ALSO STRESSED THAT CARTER PLEDGED TO CONTINUE SUPPLYING CLASSIFIED INFORMATION TO CONGRESS IN LINE WITH RECENT ARRANGEMENTS TO OVERSEE U.S. INTELLIGENCE ACTIVITIES.

"WE HAD A LONG TALK ABOUT LEAKS," BAKER SAID. "LEAKS ARE AN EPIDEMIC DISEASE IN WASHINGTON, AND I SUPPOSE THEY'LL CONTINUE TO BE. BUT IF YOU CAN'T STOP THEM, AT LEAST YOU OUGHT TO SLOW THEM DOWN."

"THE PRESIDENT CITED SOME (EXAMPLES) THAT DID IN FACT DAMAGE THE NATIONAL INTEREST, PRIMARILY IN THE FIELD OF A NEW RELUCTANCE OF RELIABLE SOURCES TO CONFIDE INFORMATION TO U.S. OFFICIALS."

BAKER SAID THAT IN ONE EXAMPLE CITED BY CARTER, "A FORMERLY RELIABLE SOURCE INDICATED THAT HE KNEW OF A PARTICULAR SITUATION BUT WASN'T GOING TO TELL US BECAUSE HE WAS SURE IT WOULD GET IN THE PRESS."

BAKER SAID TOO MANY PEOPLE NOW HAVE ACCESS TO HIGHLY CLASSIFIED INFORMATION. "RIGHT NOW EVERYBODY AND HIS BROTHER HAS ACCESS TO THE MOST SENSITIVE SORT OF INFORMATION IN THE CONGRESS, AND THAT'S TOO BIG A RISK," HE SAID. "SO I THINK WE HAVE TO BACK OFF AND TAKE ANOTHER LOOK AT IT."

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